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ABSTRACT

Little research has been conducted with adult students to identify their counseling needs. To investigate whether adult student perceptions of counseling needs are related to their developmental stage, and their relative importance, 878 community college students, who were 18 years of age and older, and who attended evening and weekend classes were surveyed. A demographic information sheet and survey of student counseling needs were administered in packet form by the regular class instructors. The results indicated that respondents across developmental, sex, marital, and employment status groups tended to endorse the same 12 needs, although their rank-ordering varied. There were few differences in the perceptions of needs between younger, traditional students and older, nontraditional students. Younger students assigned greater importance to choosing academic courses and programs, identifying financial aid sources, improving job seeking skills, and coping with leisure time. The older adult students reported greater need of coping with parenting difficulties. The middle groups, those aged 23-27 and 28-37, did not differ much from the younger students. Although the results of this study do not support the existence of many differences in the perceived counseling needs of traditional young adult and nontraditional, older adult students, the findings suggest that detailed analysis of specific subgroups may be warranted in future studies and program planning. (LLL)

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Counseling Needs Among Adult Students on a Community College Campus

1984

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Much research addressing adult student counseling needs has compared traditional and nontraditional student groups (Batdorf, 1976; Blocher and Rapoza, 1981; Goldberg, 1980; Williams, Lindsay, Burns, Wycoff and Wall, 1973). Traditional students are typically described as young adults in their late teens or early twenties, who experience college attendance as a normal progression in their development and the college environment as a continuation of the familiar classroom setting. Nontraditional students are usually identified as being older individuals (ranging from the late twenties to the senior years) who enter college as a result of personal or occupational change; and who lack understanding of college routines and recent experience in the classroom.

Traditional students enjoy the support of parents and friends because attending college seems to be preparation for the future, even if they matriculate with ill-defined educational and occupational goals. Nontraditional students enter college for generally three reasons: (1) advancing in their chosen, and already established occupational field; (2) achieving greater life satisfaction, sometimes through preparing for career change; and (3) adjusting to sudden life changes such as divorce, death in the family, or unemployment (Blocher and Rapoza, 1981). Nontraditional students experience tremendous changes in response to entering college. Frequently they must justify attendance to family, friends, and employers, who do not understand their needs for college study (Dewey, 1980).

Traditional students enter college when continuing their education is a central developmental task. They are seeking to establish identity and antonomy by means of the college experience. Nontraditional students, on the other hand, have established their sense of identity, but may have this identity questioned by the transition to college life (Donovan, 1981). Traditional students are encouraged to learn adult role responsibilities in the relatively safe atmosphere of the college. Nontraditional students must adjust to the dependent role of student and the experience of interacting and competing with younger students (Batdorf, 1976; Donovan, 1981).

Adult students, having realistic perceptions of the world of work, often return to college with a sense of urgency to apply skills they intend to develop (Batdorf, 1976). Confronting the realities of college life, they may perceive the institution as disinterested and having rules and guidelines that seem unusually restrictive (Kuhn and Sturgis, 1980; Krings, 1976). Cardinale (1983) observed that older adult students are very pragmatic. They want to take home some tangible benefits for their efforts and sacrifices. Older students lose patience with college staff insensitivity and error, program constraints, and services not tailored to their individual needs (Cardinale, 1983).

Some authors (Carney, Savity, and Weiskott, 1979; Blocher and Rapoza, 1981; Goldberg, 1980) have suggested that modifications of college counseling centers are necessary in order to address the needs of the increasingly prevalent adult students. Frequently, the nontraditional students, many being commuters, are not aware of the services provided

by a college counseling center. They sometimes find that services are not available in the evenings or on weekends, when it would be most convenient for them to seek assistance. Finally, adult students are often confronted with counseling oriented to the personal and career exploration needs of younger students. Returning adults need counselors to recognize their broad range of past and present life experiences; and use that experience to support the academic environment.

Very little research has been conducted with adult students to actually identify their counseling needs. One study (Allemore, Cochran, and Mardoyan, 1983) compared counseling needs of students over twenty years of age (traditional group) with those of students over twenty-five years of age (older student group). They found few significant differences between the counseling concerns of traditional and older students. In five of the 18 typical areas, traditional students reported greater concern than older students in the following areas: initial career choice, skills for job seeking, discrimination or harassment, grades or study skills, and dealing with university faculty (procedures, etc.). No older student concerns were significantly higher than those of the traditional group. In fact, the reported concerns of older students were numerically higher for only two topics: sexual concerns, and coping with death, separation or loss. As might be expected, the greatest concern of adult students was career goal revision. However, it was surprising that traditional students experienced greater concern than older students for building study skills and dealing with the institution.

In another study, Ancheta (1980) compared the counseling needs of

traditional and nontraditional community college students. However, "traditional" was defined as full-time day attendance and "nontraditional" as part-time evening enrollment, rather than using age as a grouping factor. Although the age of the small sample was not reported, the author described evening students as mature adults, most employed full-time. Ancheta (1980) found no significant differences between the two groups in their use of academic, career, and personal counseling services. The results were discussed as support for providing equal access to all counseling services during day and evening hours.

Several researchers (Corrado and Mangano, 1980; Kasworm, 1982; Smallwood, 1980) focused specifically on the counseling needs of adult students over 25 years of age. Corrado and Mangano (1980) created a taxonomy of needs by dividing the two-year college experience into five domains: (1) academic survival skills, (2) personal-social development, (3) instructional patterns, (4) administrative policies, and (5) student support services. Students rated each of the five specific needs according to its perceived importance. Then, the authors rank-ordered the five items according to mean and standard deviation, creating lists of first-order (highest), second-order and third-order needs. Overall, academic survival skills were rated highest because all of the needs in this domain were viewed as important. The category with the lowest rating was student support services, having many needs with below-average estimates of importance. The top five needs overall in descending order were (1) having courses that provide specific job skills, (2) taking

evening classes, (3) completing speedy registration, (4) having instructors who are personally interested in the student's program, and (5) getting As and Bs in coursework. Most of these needs reflect the pragmatic orientation of adult students.

In examining only the students support services domain, the results of Corrado and Mangano (1980) were consistent with those of Ancheta (1980), both studies finding that nontraditional students were most in need of academic counseling. Occupational/career counseling was also rated highly, but personal counseling was not viewed as important. Since many adult students enter college following upheaval or dramatic change in their personal ties, it is curious that personal counseling was seldom sought or reported as important. On the other hand, the data reported thus far indicate that academic advisement (or educational counseling) and related matters are very important to adult students.

Smallwood (1980) identified the counseling needs of college women over the age of 25. The top five needs in descending rank order were (1) coordinating child care with studies, (2) coordinating job with studies, (3) learning to study efficiently, (4) deciding what courses to take, and (5) having the ability to succeed in college. The students in their sample seemed to be primarily concerned with scheduling needs. When their needs to balance education, family/home and work responsibilities were addressed, they expressed more concern for academic support services.

Most studies (including several of those reviewed) treat all students over 25 years of age as a homogeneous group of "adult students". Kasworm (1982) investigated differences in perceived needs for student support services among traditional students (18 to 22), and adult students in two age groupings: 26 to 29 and 30 to 39. The entire age

range (18 to 39) corresponds to the period of "Early Adulthood" described by Levinson (1978). Kasworm (1982) found that younger students (18 to 22) had the greatest need for orientation services and student union activities. The oldest group (30 to 39), when compared to the others, indicated less need for the whole range of student support services, while the perceptions of middle group did not differ much from those of the traditional students.

According to Levinson's (1978) popular work, there are many significant differences in needs among adults in various life phases. Young adults (approximately 18 - 24) are supposed to be concerned with leaving home, establishing antonomy, and making initial educational or occupational decisions. The next age group (early 20's to late 20's) is concerned with getting into the adult world, establishing family and community roles, developing capacity for intimacy, and establishing oneself in a career. The early 30's age group is characterized as settling down, making deeper commitments to family and career, pursuing stability and success and settling long-range goals. However, there is an age 30 transition (late 20's to early 30's in chronological age) in which many adults change careers, return to school and experience major changes in marital and family relationships. "Becoming one's own person" is the theme of the life phase from approxmiately 35 to 42. In this age group, persons are concerned with breaking dependent ties with significant others (spouse, mentor, boss, etc.), receiving affirmation or recognition by society, realizing that time is limited (instead of boundless, which

is the perspective of youth), and pursuing other career/social roles (for women whose first career was in the home).

Like the age 30 transition, there is another period of change and instability for many adults. The mid-life transition of the early 40's. In this group, there are many changes arising from realizations that life ambitions may not be achieved. Shifts in career and family roles are encountered. Then, there is a period of relative stability from the mid 40's until the transition into the 50's. The stable, "re-establishment" period is typically a time of enjoyment and enthusiastic contribution to others. For men, the mid 40's represents the period in which the occupational die is cast for most individuals. Levinson(1978) noted that women often continue to pursue career changes into the 50's.

The transition to the 50's is accompanied by another reexamination of the goodness of fit between life's accomplishments and emerging personal needs. With a recognition of the "things I would like to do in the last half of my life" comes an imperative to change or to vigorously pursue deferred goals. For some there are radical changes, and whole new beginnings. From the late 50's to the early 60's, the needs are related to the culmination of middle adulthood. This is a stable period in which there is mellowing, greater comfort with self and significant others, and broadening of interests to accomplish life's goals in the remaining time. Finally, Levinson (1978) postulated a "late adult transition" (aged 60 and beyond), which is a challenging, existential period. The needs of this phase relate to coping with physical decline

and death, accepting what has occurred in life's course, establishing meaning, reaffirming values, and adjusting to retirement and loss. Although the phases and age groupings are approximate - including the closing of significant life transitions in the 60's, which may be viewed as premature given the increased life expectancies of most Americans- Levinson's (1978) account sheds some light on potential differences in counseling needs among adult students.

In reviewing the literature on adult counseling needs, it is apparent that some "finer grain" analysis is needed to identify relavent sub-groupings of students who are 18 years of age or older. Kasworm (1982) recommended that future research should specify student needs from a lifespan perspective. Similarly, other researchers (Lowenthal, Thurnber, and Chiriboga, 1982 Mass and Kroypers, 1982) indicated that student developmental needs can be best understood by taking age, sex, and selected sociodemographic variables into consideration. The present study attempted to address the recommendations for a lifespan, multifaceted investigation of adult student counseling needs and their relative importance.

Method

Participants

The population for this descriptive survey study was 878 adult students, eighteen years of age and older, who were enrolled in at least one course for credit on the main campus of Luzerne County Community College, which is located in Northeastern Pennsylvania. In order to secure as many responses from nontraditiona, older adult students as possible, the survey was administered to all evening and weekend classes. Although the purposive sampling method was used with the goal of obtaining large numbers of male and female respondents in each of Levinson's (1978) developmental periods, some small cells created problems for subsequent data analyses. Therefore, four groups were identified: 18 - 22 years of age, 23 - 27 years of age, 28 - 37 years of age and 38 - 62 years of age.

Thirty percent of the respondents were 18 - 22 years old, 24 percent were 23 - 27 years old, 30 percent were 28 - 37 years old, and 16 percent were 38 - 62 years old. Like most nontraditional student populations, women comprised the majority of respondents (61 percent of the sample). Most of the women (56 percent) and men (56 percent) in the sample were single, although 79 percent of women and 81 percent of men, 28 years of age or older, were married.

The majority of students (66 percent) were employed full time, with only 18 percent working part-time and 16 percent being unemployed.

Sixty-five percent of the respondents had attended college within the last four years. Many (43 percent) were continuing students in that they reported attending school in the year before the current academic term. Only 18 percent of the participants were full-time students, taking twelve or more credit hours, and only 14 percent attended class on the weekend. Thus, the typical survey respondent was a single woman, employed full-time and continuing college studies which were recently initiated. This participant also engaged in part-time college work, attending evening classes.

Instrumentation

The study employed the following instrumentation: (1) a demographic information sheet developed by Corrado and Mangano (1980) and modified for use at the particular community college site, and (2) a Survey of Student Counseling Needs, developed specifically for this research. The survey was a self-report instrument consisting of 24 fixed items and one open-ended item (which was not endorsed by student respondents). The demographic sheet and survey required ten minutes or less of class time.

IN order to insure high content validity, each item used on the survey of Student Counseling Needs had appeared in related studies (Allen, Cochran, and Mardoyan, 1980; Ancheta, 1980; Kasworm, 1982; and Smallwood, 1980). The content and format of the survey most closely resembled the instrument constructed by Corrado and Mangano (1980), which had high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient

of .95). A pilot study was conducted to determine reliability for the survey. Test-retest reliability coefficients ranged from .82 to .98 for the 24 items over a six week period.

Procedures

The demographic information sheet and student survey were administered in pocket form by the regular instructors of the students' evening or weekend classes. Completion of the instruments was optional and 15 students declined to participate.

Participants were instructed to rate each of the counseling needs on a five-point scale according to their perception of its importance. The scale ranged from "unimportant" (1 point) to "important" (5 points). The survey and accompanying demographic sheet were administered during the second week of classes in the fall 1983 semester.

Results

The study attempted to answer two research questions: (1) Are perceptions of selected counseling needs related to the developmental period (age group) of adult students? and (2) What is the rank-order of counseling needs, according to their perceived importance, among adult students from different developmental and sociodemographic groups? The first question was addressed by means of a discriminant function analysis and some related secondary analyses. The second question was

treated descriptively, using group means to construct lists of rank-ordered needs, which were then compared.

In the first analysis of data, perceptions of importance of the 24 counseling needs were treated as discriminating variables while developmental periods (18 - 22, 28 - 37, and 38 - 62 years of age) were used to define groups. A stepwise discriminant analysis using the Wilks criterion was conducted with the assistarce of the "Discriminant" subprogram of the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) . The results are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Function	Eigenvalue	Percent of Variance	Cumulative Percent	Canonical Correlation	Wilks Lambda	Chi Square	df	Significance
1	.129	79.78	79.78	.339	.967	25.56	24	.375
2	.017	10.25	90.04	.128	.984	12.60	11	.320
3	.016	9.96	100.00	.126				

The results revealed that there was no adequate linear combination of discriminating variables (counseling needs) to predict developmental group relationship. The statistically insignificant discriminant functions were able to predict group membership correctly in only 33.83 percent of pooled cases in the classification phase of the analysis. Using this analysis only, it was not possible to conclude that there are differences in the perceived importance of counseling needs which can be attributed to the developmental grouping of the survey respondents. However,

secondary analyses revealed some differences which can be interpreted cautiously.

Since the stepwise discriminant analysis entered the 24 independent variables (ratings of counseling needs) into the equation based upon the univariate F-ratios for each need, there were some significant differences among group means. The means, standard deviations, and related statistics, for items in which there were significant differences among the four groups, are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Differences in Group Means for Selected Needs

Need	Group Means (Standard Deviations) 18 - 22	23 - 27	28 -37	38 - 62	F-Ratio	Significance
6	4.108(1.161)	3.893(1.375)	3.679(1.492)	3.500(1.618)	6.567	.000
15	4.386(0.973)	4.250(1.191)	4.158(1.144)	4.060(1.321)	2.748	.042
18	3.237(1.520)	3.031(1.575)	3.363(1.589)	3.698(1.511)	4.766	.003
19	3.430(1.557)	3.31[illegible]0)	3.145(1.549)	2.991(1.477)	2.713	.004

For three of the four needs listed in Table 2, adult students from the developmental period 18 - 22 perceived greater need importance than the remaining groups. Mean ratings of importance for three of the four needs were lowest in the 38 - 62 age group. The older adult students (38 - 62 years old) reported greater importance than the other groups for one need. The needs corresponding to the significant items were (6) "Identifying Financial Aid Sources for Educational Purposes," (15) "Improving Job Hunting/Job Search Skills," (18) "Coping with Parenting Difficulties" and (19) "Coping with Leisure Time."

Another set of secondary analyses produced some results which suggest a difference in counseling needs among the groups. A discriminant analysis, in which all 24 variables were entered concurrently, produced a pattern of difference among group means and group centroids that was similar to the one produced by the stepwise procedure. The discriminant functions generated were nonsignificant although the centroids suggested that the greatest difference in perception was between the youngest (18 - 22) and the oldest (38 - 62) survey respondents. An examination of univariate F-ratios identified one additional need in which there was a significant difference. Need 1 ("Choosing Academic Courses and Appropriate Programs") group means were 4.62 (SD=.72) for 18 - 22 year olds, 4.56 (SD=.86) for the 23 - 27 group, 4.58 (SD=.88) for the 28 - 37 group, and 4.23 (SD=1.21) for the 38 - 62 year olds.

The second research question was approached descriptively in order to generate lists of counseling needs, which were valuable in the pragmatic sense (e.g., as needs assessments for program design) and useful for designing future research studies. Lists of rank-ordered counseling needs were prepared according to developmental period, sex, and marital status. However, reporting the exhaustive lists is beyond the scope of the present review. Therefore, the top twelve needs (50 percent of the total list of needs) will be provided for selected groups.

Since the greatest differences in perceptions appeared to occur between the youngest (18 - 22) and the oldest (38 - 62) group, the rankings of need importance are particularly important in this comparison.

Table 3

Top Twelve Counseling Needs of Students in the 18 - 22 and 38 - 62 Developmental Groups

18 - 22		38 - 62	
Rank	Description	Rank	Description
1	Choosing Academic Courses and Appropriate Programs	1	Choosing a Career or Changing a Career
2	Choosing a Career or Changing a Career	2	Improving Study Skills
3	Improving Self Esteem/Self Confidence	3	Improving Decision-Making Skills[a]
4	Identifying Occupationan and Job Trends	4	Improving Self Esteem/Self Confidence
5	Improving Study Skills	5	Improving Communication Skills
6	Improving Job Hunting/Job Search Skills[b]	6	Choosing Academic Courses and Appropriate Programs
7	Identifying Personal Aptitudes, Attitudes, and Interests	7	Improving Assertion Skills
8	Improving Communication Skills	8	Identifying Occupational and Job Trends
9	Improving Decision Making Skills[a]	9	Identifying Personal Aptitudes, Attitudes, and Interests
10	Improving Assertion Skills	10	Improving Time Management Skills[c]
11	Coping with Stress	11	Coping with Stress
12	Coping with Academic Failure	12	Coping with Academic Failure

[a]The greatest difference between ranks on the two lists occurs with this need.

[b]This need does not appear in the top twelve of the 38 - 62 group.

[c]This need does not appear in the top twelve of the 18 - 22 group.

As depicted in Table 3, the two groups mostly shared perceptions of the importance of counseling needs. Only one need in each list failed to appear in the top 12 needs of the other group. The greatest discrepancy between listed needs was "Improving Decision-Making Skills", the third most important need of the 38 - 62 year old group and the ninth of the 18 - 22 year olds.

In terms of sex of respondents, there were some minor differences in the rank-ordering of the top twelve needs.

Table 4

Top Twelve Counseling Needs of Students by Sex

Rank	Male Description	Rank	Females Description
1	Choosing Academic Courses and Appropriate Programs	1	Choosing a Career or Changing a Career
2	Choosing a Career or Changing a Career	2	Choosing Academic Courses and Appropriate Programs
3	Improving Study Skills[a]	3	Improving Self Esteem/Self Confidence
4	Improving Self Esteem/Self Confidence	4	Improving Communication Skills
5	Improving Decision-Making Skills	5	Identifying Occupational and Job Trends
6	Identifying Occupational and Job Trends	6	Identifying Personal Aptitudes, Attitudes, and Interests
7	Improving Assertion Skills	7	Improving Decision-Making Skills
8	Improving Communication Skills	8	Improving Study Skills[a]
9	Improving Job Hunting/Job Search Skills	9	Improving Job Hunting/Job Search Skills
10	Identifying Personal Aptitudes, Attitudes, and Interests	10	Coping with Stress
11	Improving Time Management Skills[b]	11	Improving Assertion Skills
12	Coping with Stress	12	Coping with Academic Failure[c]

[a]The greatest difference between ranks on the two lists occurs with this need.

[b]This need does not appear in the top twelve of the female respondents.

[c]This need does not appear in the top twelve of the male respondents.

The results presented in Table 4 indicate that male and female adult students shared perceptions of the importance of counseling needs. Only one need in each list failed to appear in the top 12 needs of the other group. The greatest discrepancy between listed needs was "Improving Study Skills", the third ranked need of the women. The listing of top needs for men and women included the same twelve entries contained on the lists prepared for 18 - 22 and 26 - 62 year old groups.

In fact, respondents across developmental, sex, marital and employment status groups tended to endorse the same twelve needs, although their rank-

ordering varied somewhat. Therefore, the following list includes the entries which were perceived as relatively less important by all of the adult community college students.

Table 5

Counseling Needs Perceived as Less Important by Adult Students

Choosing a Marriage Partner
Identifying Financial Aid Services for Educational Purposes
Identifying Family Support Systems that Encourage College Attendance
Improving Marital or Dating Relationships
Coping with Family Difficulties
Coping with Getting Older
Coping with Parenting Difficulties
Coping with Leisure Time
Coping with Personal Concerns
Coping with Death or Loss of a Loved One
Coping with Divorce or Separation

Notes: Eleven needs are listed because "Coping with Stress" or "Coping with Academic Failure" appear in the top twelve rankings of some groups. The needs are not listed in rank-order of perceived importance. Rather, they are assumed to be relatively less important because the Table 5 needs fail to appear consistently in the top rankings of various adult student groups.

Students reported that personal, marital, and family counseling needs were less important than academic and career needs. In addition, they infrequently found financial aid or family support as important in their community college careers.

In order to secure a more specific analysis of counseling needs across subgroups in the sample, rank-ordered lists were prepared according to developmental period (age grouping), sex, and marital status. While it

is not feasible to present all of the tables here, the following differences were observed among the lists of needs.

In the 18 - 22 year old group, several differences were note worthy. Married women highly ranked "Identifying Personal Aptitudes, Attitudes, and Interests" while single men attached much less importance to the need. On the other hand, single men endorsed "Identifying Occupational and Job Trends", and married women perceived less importance for this need. Single 18 - 22 year old women reported that "Improving Study Skills" was quite important. Married women assigned much lower importance to this need and evidenced additional dissimilarity to single women when they highly rated "Improving Decision-Making Skills".

In the 23 - 27 year old group, a number of differences were observed. Single men, single women, and married women found "Choosing a Career or Changing a Career" to be a top ranked need. Married men were much less concerned with this need. Like the 18 - 22 year old group, married women (when compared to other groups) highly ranked "Identifying Personal Aptitude, Attitudes, and Interests"..Single women ranked "Identifying Occupationaland Job Trends" lower than the other groups, while single men ranked "Improving Communication Skills" lower. Men attached greater importance than women to "Improving Study Skills" while women perceived "Coping with Stress" as more important. Single women, unlike the others, were concerned with "Improving Self Esteem/Self Confidence".

In the 28 - 37 group, a few novel and some recurrent differences were noted. "Choosing Academic Courses and Appropriate Programs", a generally significant need across all groups, received a relatively low

importance rating from single 28 - 37 year old men. Contrary to the observed differences for 18 - 22 and 23 - 27 year olds, married men attached greatest importance to "Identifying Personal Aptitudes, Attitudes, and Interests". Another need, "Improving Communication Skills", received high endorsement from all but the single women. Single men and women, unlike their married counterparts in this age group, found "Improving Study Skills" to be very important. Only single men highly endorsed the related need, "Improving Time Management Skills". Finally, "Improving Assertion Skills" was ranked higher by married men and single women than by single men and married women.

In reviewing the rankings of the most diverse group, 38 - 62 year olds, many differences were identified. "Choosing Academic Courses and Appropriate Programs" was ranked highest in importance for married women. There was an insufficient number of single men in this developmental group; therefore, it was impossible to compare the aforementioned finding to the result obtained with single 28 - 37 year old men, who attached less importance to the need than other sub groups in the 28 - 37 developmental period. Another need, "Identifying Occupational and Job Trends", was ranked lower in importance for single women than for the other two groups. "Improving Communication Skills" was highly endorsed by single and married women, but not be the men. "Improving Study Skills" was a top-ranked need for married 28 - 62 year old women, although single women found it to be much less important. Married men, when compared to the single and married women, ranked "Improving Time Management Skills"

as lower in importance. However, they were more concerned than the women with "Improving Decision-Making Skills". Single women assigned much importance to "Improving Self-Esteem/Self Confidence", while married women reported less significe for this need than did married men. Finally, "Improving Assertion Skills" was ranked very high in importance by married men and single women, but not be married women.

Overall, the analysis of results, obtained in addressing the first research question, revealed the greatest difference between selected need perceptions of the 18 - 22 and 38 - 62 developmental groups. The traditional students (18 - 22) assigned higher importance to "Choosing Academic Courses and Appropriate Programs", "Identifying Financial Aid Sources for Traditional Purposes", "Improving Job Hunting/Job Search Skills", and "Coping with Leisure Time". The older adult students (38 - 62) reported greater importance than the other groups for the need, "Coping with Parenting Difficulties". While these differences were statistically significant in pot-luck testing, discriminant function analyses failed to reveal any combination of needs which would significantly predict group membership. Therefore, the differences observed for the five counseling needs must be interpreted cautiously. In addition, the review of lists of needs, completed to evaluate the second research question, indicated that the needs, "Choosing Academic Courses and Appropriate Programs" and "Improving Job Hunting/Job Search Skills", were the only two of the five to be ranked consistently in the top twelve (or one-half) of needs.

Selected comparisons of the top twelve rank-ordered needs indicated a few interesting differences. The greatest discrepancy between top-ranked needs was "Improving Decision-Making Skills", receiving a higher rating by the 38 - 62 than by the 18 - 22 year old students. Respondents in the 18 - 22 group endorsed "Improving Job Hunting/Job Search Skills",one of the statistically significant needs from the former set of analyses. However, the need failed to appear in the top twelve of the 38 - 62 group, who included "Improving Time Management Skills" instead. Comparison of counseling needs endorsed by male and female students revealed greatest discrepancy in ranks for "Improving Study Skills" (higher for men than women). Male students endorsed "Improving Time Management Skills", while female students did not. The opposite was true for "Coping with Academic Failure". Developmental period, sex, and marital status were taken into consideration in subsequent reviews of of rank-ordered needs. Some interesting differences emerged; however, the listing of the top twelve needs did not vary much across the subgroups.

Discussion

The results of this study of perceived counseling needs among 18 - 62 year old Northeastern Pennsylvania Community College Students confirmed some findings from other studies of adult student needs and generally failed to confirm the existence of major differences in the perceptions of counseling needs attributable to developmental period. Some

findings suggested that subgroup differences are discernable when developmental period (age), sex, and marital status are taken into consideration. Thus, there are implications for future research.

The results of the discriminant analyses (as well as the similarities encountered in the ranking of counseling needs by various groups) confirmed the findings of several studies (Alleman, Cochran, and Mardoyan, 1983; Ancheta, 1980; Kasworm, 1982). There were few differences in the perceptions of needs of younger, traditional students and older, nontraditional students. Although the greatest differences were encountered in comparisons of 18 - 22 and 38 - 62 year old students, contrary to some popular notions, the younger students actually assigned greater importance to four of the five counseling needs in which there were statistically significant differences in mean ratings. The middle groups, 23 - 27 and 28 - 37 year olds, did not differ much from the younger students: supporting Kasworm's (1982) findings and failing to confirm the hypothesis of unique need patterns attributable to developmental periods, as suggested by Levinson (1978) and others.

This study also confirmed the existant data on the nature of adult student counseling needs (see Ancheta, 1980; Corrado and Mangano, 1980). Adult community college students, without regard to developmental period, sex, and marital status, indicated that academic counseling needs were most important. Also, all students perceived occupational/career counseling needs as important. However, personal counseling needs were infrequently rated as important. Personal needs seemed to assume greater

importance with some specific subgroups, suggesting that some "finer grain" analysis may be needed to identify such needs when they are perceived among a subset of students.

Interpretations of the statistically significant differences in group means must be offered cautiously; however, there are some programatic and research implications. Although there are frequent suggestions that older adult, nontraditional students will encounter difficulty in adjusting to college requirements and routines, the younger students actually attached greater importance to identifying financial resources and choosing academic courses and programs. The oldest group (38 - 62) were less concerned than the middle groups (23 - 37) with these college needs. The younger groups were also more concerned than the older students with developing job finding skills and coping with leisure time. These results are interesting because frequently student services planners assume that returning women students need help with job hunting. Similarly, some specialists in services for older adults assume that this group needs help in constructing and implementing leisure activities. The older adult group differed significantly from the others when it endorsed the need of coping with parenting difficulties. This need can be understood when one realizes that adults in this age group are not only responsible for dealing with adolescent and young adult children, but also with their aging parents. Perhaps service planners and researchers should examine this need closely in the future.

The descriptive treatment of rank-ordered counseling needs for various

subgroups yielded some findings which may interest planners and researchers. Among the counseling needs consistently rated in the top twelve across developmental, sex, and marital groups, several observed differences in ranks suggested special needs. "Identifying Personal Aptitudes, Attitudes, and Interests" was ranked highest by married students, especially women from 18 - 27 years of age. Women and adults experiencing role transition may have the greatest need for self-appraisal prior to educational and occupational decision-making. Therefore, testing services could be especially valuable to married women.

"Improving Study Skills" was another interesting counseling need that was differentially endorsed by subgroups. The need seemed most important among the following: single 18 - 22 year old women, single and married 23 - 27 year old men, single 28 - 37 year old men and women, and married 38 - 62 year old women. The pattern is difficult to interpret. However, the findings somewhat support Smallwood's (1980) results in which learning to study effectively was important to women over 26 years of age. Overall, men (especially in the 23 - 37 age range) ranked study skills higher than did women. The pattern could be related to perceived role transitions, which could be investigated in future studies.

"Improving Assertion" was differentially endorsed by married men and single women in the 28 - 62 age range. Perhaps, career advancement for these adult students is linked to building assertion skills. Several other needs appeared most important to specific subgroups.

"Improving Self Esteem" was endorsed by single women in the 23 - 27 and 38 - 62 developmental periods. "Coping with Stress" was a significant need for 23 - 27 year old, single and married women. "Improving Communication Skills" was a concern of all 38 - 62 year old women. These three needs may signal transitions in which personal needs emerge for women. Men rated these personal needs as much less important.

"Improving Time Management Skills" was the major concern of men (especially in the single 28 - 37 year old group) that discriminated them from women students. Most men in the study were likely to be preoccupied with advancing their careers. Thus, college attendance and career demand may create perceived scarcity of time, particularly if these men were attempting to stablize their family life or pursuing new social/ dating relationships, as well.

"Improving Decision-Making Skills" perceived a much higher rating by the 38 - 62 year old students than by the 18 - 22 year old group. According to Levinson (1978), the older individuals are much more likely to become engaged in reassessment of life goals and pursuit of deferred needs. Therefore, they may actually need stronger decision-making and problem-solving skills than their younger counterparts who are still "opening doors" and seeking multiple options. On the other hand, the younger students (18 - 22 year olds) were the group who attached greatest importance to "Improving job Hunting/Job Search Skills". Unlike older students, they were likely preoccupied with finding a good entry-level job. Those two needs point out differences in traditional and nontraditional

students which may be linked to developmental stage.

Although the results of this study do not support the existence of many differences in the perceived counseling needs of traditional young adult and nontraditional, older adult student groups, the findings suggest that detailed analysis of specific subgroups may be warranted in future studies and program plannings. Most students are concerned with academic and career issues. The younger students perceive the greatest needs for counseling services. However, some personal counseling needs emerge as important in specific groups defined by age (developmental period), sex, and marital status. One of the major implications of the study is that adult students across subgroups tend to endorse the same twelve needs in approximately the same rank-order. Future research should focus on these needs and address perceptions of role transitions, rather than singly defining developmental period according to age.

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